

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2384

As Reported by House Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to geological survey.

Brief Description: Concerning the state geological survey.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Buck, Blake and B. Sullivan; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 1/12/06, 1/13/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Instructs the Geological Survey to conduct and maintain an assessment of the volcanic, seismic, landslide, and tsunami hazards in Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chandler, Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Hunt, Kagi and Orcutt.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), through the appointed Supervisor of Geology, is responsible for maintaining the state Geological Survey (Survey). The Survey is required to meet a number of objectives, including examinations of the state's mined products, the state's water resources, the state's soil classifications, and the occurrence of natural road building materials. The Survey must also produce geological and economic maps and information related to science and economics deemed of value by the Supervisor of Geology. Reports and maps generated from the Survey must be made available to the general public for purchase.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The state "Supervisor of Geology" is renamed the "State Geologist". References in the code to the old title are updated to reflect the title change.

The Survey is instructed to conduct and maintain an assessment of the volcanic, seismic, landslide, and tsunami hazards in Washington. The assessment must include identification and mapping of hazards, as well as an estimation of the potential consequences and the likelihood of a geological hazard event.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill repealed most parts of the enabling legislation for the Survey and replaced the existing language with new duties and expectations. The substitute bill maintains the existing enabling language and retains from the original bill only the additional direction to assess geological hazards.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/11/06.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Hurricane Katrina and the Sumatra tsunami have demonstrated the importance of disaster preparedness and assessing geological risk. With the state's largest city vulnerable to liquefaction and the coast susceptible to a tsunami, the state needs to do all that it can to prepare for possible disaster situations and to focus on the primary risks. Maps of damage prone areas are vital for emergency service preparation, and planning will be important for rebuilding the state in the event of a catastrophe.

The original enabling legislation for the Survey was drafted in the early 1900's. The needs and requirements of the Survey have changed since the initial creation, and the current code should reflect modern needs.

There is an economic benefit available to the state if it invests in its geological resources. Energy exploration companies will invest in the state if they have access to modern and reliable information on the mineral composition of the area. Currently, there is not any natural gas production in the state, but that could change if an investment was made in mapping coal seams and other resources.

The Survey is an important, unbiased place for research and public education to occur. It has been able to do much with diminishing funds, but a reinvestment in the Survey is needed. The state geological library is an important resource that needs investment to keep modern. Science done in isolation is not as effective. The geological library and public dissemination role of the Survey ensures that research is efficient.

Local governments and land planners need help in knowing where communities should be built and where gravel and aggregate resources are located. Poor counties have the same geological needs as large counties, but lack the necessary resources to tend to those needs.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Representative Buck; Ron Teissere, Department of Natural Resources; Thomas Deacon, Cascadia Energy Corporation and Methane Energy Corporation; Jim Zimmerman, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Kitty Reed; Connie Manson, American Geological Institute; Lori Evans, Kinross Gold USA; William Steele, University of Washington; Eric Holdeman, King County Office of Emergency Management; Kathy Troost, University of Washington; Heath Packard, Audubon Society; and Mark Molinari, Association of Environmental and Engineering Geologists.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.